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ABSTRACT

Four possible alternative approaches for developing word recognition skills (including sample lesson plans for both primary and intermediate grades) were presented. The first emphasized the importance of the relative order of difficulty of word analysis skills involving phonic abilities and auditory and visual discrimination in both primary and intermediate grades. The second program stressed the use of vocabulary selected from words in the child's speaking vocabulary. The third focused on the inductive method of word recognition, and the fourth program emphasized the importance of acquiring both an intensive and extensive vocabulary. The lesson plans stressed the aspects of phoneme identification, knowledge of homophones, word classifications, and awareness of multimeaning vocabulary. The plans utilized self-directing/self-correcting material, every-pupil response techniques, and team-learning organizational patterns. References are included. (CL)

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INDEPENDENCE IN WORD RECOGNITION

"Utilizing Word Recognition Skills While Improving Deficiencies"

Semantics is the term commonly used when referring to the science of the meanings of words. Phonetics, on the other hand, refers to the science of the sounds of language. It occurs to this speaker that the topic of today's session is concerned with both of these elements since a consideration of word recognition implies attention to the sounds and the meanings of our language.

Having been assigned the topic indicated on the program I cannot be responsible for <u>your</u> understanding of what it means to you. I must, however, clearly indicate what it means to me since my conceptualization

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of it has influenced those ideas which I have chosen to develop with you this afternoon.

I must admit to being confused, as some of you undoubtedly are, by the use of the word, "improve", in the title of my part of today's session. Upon consulting Webster's College Dictionary, Fifth Edition (since that is the one that was current in my collegiate days), my initial suspicion was confirmed -- "improve" means to increase. Does one increase deficiencies? The negative answer to that question is obvious and, as a consequence, I shall be happier this afternoon if you make an adjustment in your minds so that together we are able to consider the topic as one of overcoming deficiencies and, at least, we will have a more positive mental image of the area under consideration.

Definition. One who has ability in word recognition is capable of being able to recognize the form of a word, to combine the elements of the word in such a way that he is able to pronounce it, and, upon accurate pronunciation, to understand the particular meaning of that word within the context in which it appears. The word may be in his

sight vocabulary or, if it is not, he has the power, through the application of word analysis skills, to decode the word and, having been successful, to understand what it means in the place where it is used.

Importance of word recognition skills. Weakness in the areas of word recognition represent a major problem of poor readers in all age groups. This observation is not surprising when one considers those aspects already mentioned which comprise the component abilities in this area. Lacking power in this regard results in the absence of the ability to read in its truest sense. Children who have a low sight vocabulary are usually poor oral readers. Children who are without meanings for the words they successfully analyze are unable to understand (to comprehend) that which they have read. We must be continually reminded of the high positive relationship existing between general achievement and knowledge of word meanings since it implies the importance of careful and thorough teaching of vocabulary.

Approaches to teaching. My segment of today's topic assumes, it seems to me, that prior programs to which a child has been exposed have failed to be as effective as necessary. I shall, therefore, devote the remainder of my time to a consideration of four possible alternative approaches within the general area of word recognition skills.

Alternative 1. Programs in word recognition at the primary and intermediate grade levels should emphasize the importance of auditory and visual discrimination and phonics since these elements seem to contribute significantly to theoverall level of reading achievement. At the primary grade level the order of importance is visual discrimination, phonics, auditory discrimination; at the intermediate grade level it becomes phonics, visual discrimination, and auditory discrimination (3, 4).

Alternative 2. The vocabulary used in various aspects of word recognition programs should be selected from words in children's speaking vocabularies. The result of successful analysis should include the reward of meaning.

Alternative 3. Assuming the prior use of one of the many conventional word analysis programs, consideration should be given to an alternative system which emphasises an inductive approach. Many of the more usual programs are built on an analytic theory of teaching phonics involving rules and their exceptions and, in spite of their claims, often become exercises in visual analysis.

Alternative 4. Word recognition programs should provide the pupil with the opportunity to acquire an intensive vocabulary as well as one that is extensive. Because children continue to be penalized by the nature of most word meaning tests which require a knowledge of the precise meaning for the particular word, they should be encouraged to add the element of breadth to their word knowledge by being taught the multi-meanings of words.

I shall now attempt to illustrate examples of the ways in which these four alternatives can be applied to word recognition programs at the primary and intermediate grade levels.

A sample abbreviated lesson for grade two giving particular attention to the auditory elements of words and from a program which not only

to the auditory elements of words and from a program which not only increased phonic knowledge, but also resulted in a transfer of that power, could be developed in the following manner:

MATERIALS: Every-pupil response cards, 1-2-3.

PROCEDURE: Teacher reads selected words and pupils listen to hear if a particular sound occurs at the beginning, in the middle, or at the ends of words which the teacher pronounces and writes on the board. If the sound is at the beginning of the word the children hold up their "1" card, if in the middle they show their "2" card, if at the end they hold up their "3" card.

LESSON: "Let's pretend we are going to the shopping center. We'll listen for certain sounds in the names of things we find in the stores. I shall say some words that have k in them. What does k say?

Yes, 'k'. These are things which might be in the pet shop. Remember, k says 'k'. (Pronounce words and then write them on the board.)

monkey kennel duck parakeet kitten cookie

You might find these in the drug store. They all have m.

What does m say? Yes, 'm'. Listen carefully. Say the words after me. Show me the correct card.

medicine film microscope refreshments money"

you should notice that the above lesson requires that the children listen for a particular sound in varying positions in words. All the words are within the speaking vocabulary of primary grade children and are used in the lesson in some context as a further aid to meaning. Every pupil has an equal responsibility to listen as well as the same opportunity to respond. A similar approach could be used with all consonants, consonant blends, digraphs, and vowels. Simple adaptations will allow lessons of this type to put on tapes and to become self-directing. Lessons of this type also allow for the opportunity to build on the auditory skill that a pupil might have for hearing sounds at the beginning of words and extend the ability to sounds in different positions within words.

Programs designed to develop a knowledge of homophones have been shown to be effective as a means of increasing general achievement

in beginning reading and also as a means of improving children's abilities to pronounce unfamiliar words and to recognize sounds in words. A typical lesson from such programs would appear as follows:

MATERIALS: Every-pupil response cards for s and c.

PROCEDURE: Teacher reads and writes on the board selected words which begin with letters that, though different, sound alike. Children respond during the lesson by holding up the appropriate card.

LESSON: "Today I am going to say some words. Listen and see if you can tell me how they are alike.

surprise, city, cent, see, seven, circle, six

Yes, they all begin with the same sound.

Now I am going to write these words on the board. I shall say each word after I write it. Then you say it after me. (Teacher writes each of the above words.) They sound alike at the beginning but, how are they different? Yes, some words begin with s, and the other words begin with c.

Show me how surprise begins. (Teacher comments and underlines the s: teacher follows similar procedure for other s and c words.)"

A follow-up written exercise to this lesson might be presented in this manner:

The teacher uses each word in a sentence and repeats the word. The children write only the first letter of the word in the correct box.

Sample:	The <u>sun</u> can laugh.	sun
1.	Did you <u>see</u> the circus?	see
2.	I will buy <u>six</u> cupcakes.	six
3.	He earned one <u>cent</u> helping mother	cent
4.	What a <u>surprise</u>!	surprise
5.	<u>Seven</u> o'clock - to bed we go.	seven
6.	Who wants to live in the <u>city</u>?	city
7.	The top spun round in a <u>circle</u>.	circle

Sample:		1.	
	_un		_ee
2.		3.	
	_ix		_ent
4.		5.	
	_urprise		_even
6.		7.	
	_ity		_ircle

A lesson such as the above would be followed by one concerned with letters that look alike but sound different. One example might be a lesson in which the different sounds made by <u>ow</u> are presented

as in yellow and down. In every instance, however, the children are given the opportunity to see the letters and to hear their corresponding sounds. These lessons assume that the children have previously been trained in the basic elements of phoneme identification but have not yet been able to extend that knowledge beyond this beginning level.

Techniques of word analysis based on an analytic theory of teaching phonics were mentioned in "Alternative Three." This theory is built on the premise that the logical way to attack a word for pronunciation is to divide it into its major structural and phonetic parts and then to pronounce it segment by segment. Because of this idea, most of the exercises in workbooks and the recommendations of most basal reader manuals are of the "rules and exceptions" type. Such procedures include the presentation of a list of generalizations about acceptable ways to analyze words into their major parts noting such elements as vowel values, number of syllables, the placement of accents, the knowledge of prefixes and suffixes, etc.

Children following a word analysis plan in the primary grades which is associated with any one of the several phonics programs

available are often confused by the large number of words which such materials use for the purpose of providing examples to which the various phonic generalizations apply. At the first grade level, for example, the average number of words appearing in four of the phonic readers is 1,739. In grades two and three in three series the average increases to 2,096 and 2,726 respectively. These figures provide a marked contrast with the average vocabulary load of 346, 864, and 1,680 in eight basal reader series for these same respective grade levels. Though it is obvious that the phonic readers do not intend that the large number of words they present become sight words it is apparent, however, that simply being exposed to such a great number will result in confusion for some children.

Programs following the above approach present one or two rules at a time and show the pupil how they operate in a few familiar words. The pupil is then given practice in performing tasks of word analysis suggested by the rules. The fact of the matter is, of course, that generally these become exercises in visual analysis rather than phonetic

analysis. We have all had experience with the following typical situation:

Rule: "When two vowels come together in a word, generally the first vowel is long and the second vowel is silent."

Lists of words are given and the pupil is asked to mark all the long vowels. Obviously there is no need to pronounce the words and, if the words are unfamiliar (not in the child's speaking vocabulary) even pronouncing them would not be of any help.

The "rules and exception" method is clearly a deductive technique in that it proceedes from the specific rule to a general application of it. Value is placed on the ability to state the rule as a first step in learning it, understanding comes later, and the ability to apply the rule independently becomes the last step. Though it is often true that a good reader has a knowledge of the rules of analysis, there is a lack of evidence to suggest that a causal relationship exists. It is also true, of course, that many good readers are unable to quote the rules as formal statements.

Analytic methods in general do not seem to develop that polyphonic sense - a combination of good visual and auditory memory - which is characteristic of good readers. This "sense" appears to grow as a result of working with words that are highly meaningful to the reader, and, as a consequence, attempts to develop it should make meaning the basic consideration in word work such as word analysis.

A "meaning theory" of word analysis deserves some attention. The application of such a theory would present practice exercises in which the learner would solve only those words which already have meaning for him and would present them in some meaningful context. These two conditions are usually present in techniques which involve word classification and, unlike the various analytic methods, represent an inductive approach. There is evidence available to suggest that such an approach is effective with both primary and intermediate grade children (2), (1).

Primary grade children could be helped to use this approach by following a procedure such as this:

MATERIALS: Every-pupil response cards: 1-2-3

Individual flash cards with the words: Ann, Betty,

brothers, captain, clown, David, elephant, fellow, horse, Jim, men, Mrs., police, sheep, wife, wolf, women.

PROCEDURE: Teacher shows each word card in turn and children indicate category where each word fits by showing the number card which corresponds with the category.

LESSON: "These words can be put into three groups. They are about: a man, a woman, and an animal. Read the card silently. If it is about a man, hold up "1"; if it is about a woman, hold up "2"; if it is about an animal, hold up "3". (After each response the teacher should ask the children to tell her the word.)"

Following the teacher-directed lesson involving this type of oral practice, a worksheet such as the following would be completed by paris of children.

DIRECTIONS: Read the words. Read the sentences. On the lines write the words that go with the sentences. Be sure to use each word.

Ann	clown	horse	police	woman
Betty	David	Jim	sheep	
brothers	elephant	men	wife	
captain	fellow	Mrs.	wolf	

1. Father is a man, Dick and Joe will be men when they grow up. Write all the words that tell about boys and men.

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

2. Sally is a girl. She will be a woman when she grows up. Write all the words that tell about girls and women.

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

3. A dog is an animal. A cat is an animal. Write all the words that tell about animals.

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

The basic sight vocabulary of children in the intermediate grades can be extended greatly and made more intensive by concentrating on the multi-meanings of words. Programs based on teacher-led activities which utilize the overhead projector or those which are essentially pupil-directed utilizing self-directing, self-correcting worksheets have been shown to be equally effective (5).

Typical transparancies (which could be used in an identical fashion as worksheets) are as follows:

DIRECTIONS: Read the information carefully. Put the number of the best meaning in the blank.

bat (1) stout, solid stick (2) a stroke, shar blow
(3) flying animal (4) wink.

Suddenly, out of the darkness flew a _____. Although 3
we were frightened, we grasped a _____ to strike the creature 1
"Be careful not to ____ your eye and you might be able to _____ 4, 2
him with one blow," said John.

Plank (1) long, flat piece of timber (2) cook on a board
(3) article or feature of the platform of a political party.

In preparing for the rally, a stage was constructed on many _____. The candidates hotly debated the _____ concerning 1, 3
the sales tax. After the election, the victor celebrated by
treating everyone to a _____ steak 2

DIRECTIONS: Read the following information carefully. Put the number of the best meaning in the blank.

gum

(1) sticky juice from certain trees
(2) sustance on the back of stamps
(3) flesh around the teeth

Moisten the _____ on the back of the 2
stamp.
Chewing _____ in public is not polite. 1
The dentist tells us to be sure to
message our _____. 3

	stall		
(1)	compartment in a stable or shed	The people in the _____ enjoyed the play.	4
(2)	delay, evade	We had a cake _____ at the bazaar.	5
(3)	bring to a standstill	Don't try to _____ with the information.	2
(4)	cheaper seats in an English theater	The horse rested in his _____ .	1
(5)	booth in which business is carried on	On a cold morning the car _____.	3

Summary. One concerned with building independence in word recognition ability must be continually aware of the component skills of sight vocabulary, word analysis, and word meaning. Programs to strengthen these areas should utilize the aspects of auditory and visual discrimination and phonics which involve vocabulary already meaningful to the pupil and emphasize techniques which consistently continue to build meaning. Ear training exercises which aid pupils in becoming aware of sounds in different positions in words and which help them to become knowledgeable about the polyphonic attributes of our language are important areas of emphasis. Providing opportunities for both extensive

and intensive vocabulary development need to be considered an integral part of effective word recognition programs.

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